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11 July 80

AFGHANISTAN

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INSURGENCYSITUATION (4 JUL)

1. [] The USSR's President Brezhnev, in announcing the limited withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, stated that 'Afghanistan was gradually returning to normal with the route of large gangs of counter-revolutionaries'. President Brezhnev's optimistic picture of the war, however, bears no resemblance to Western diplomatic and other reports from Kabul. In contrast, the insurgency in Afghanistan, which has gained strength in the past few months, continues throughout most of the country.

2. [] In late May a US press report stated that Afghan government and Soviet forces were in substantial control of only 8 of the 28 provinces. In the remaining provinces only the provincial capitals and one or two major towns were under government control, whereas in the country-side the rebels were dominant. Later reports have confirmed that insurgency is widespread; more recent reports indicate that the increase in urban unrest and insurgency is a major problem to the Afghan Government.

3. [] The increasing unrest in the major cities has tied down large numbers of pro-government forces and has reduced the number available for deployment elsewhere. This was illustrated in June by the requirement to enforce martial law in Kabul, Herat, Qandahar, and Farah for varying periods.

4. [] Also, there are continuing reports of rebel attacks and ambushes along the main highways and roads. Rebels are attacking protected and unprotected convoys. Many recent reports indicate that travel in Afghanistan is being delayed because of acts of sabotage to the main routes or because rebel activity had forced convoys to wait for protection from pro-government forces. This is reflected by the statement in a recent press release that at least 65,000 troops are needed just to protect the ring of communications from Termez to Kushka (see Map). We consider that 65,000 is not an exaggerated figure.

5. [] The 80,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan are therefore not enough to carry out the essential security duties and to seal the borders with Iran and Pakistan, in addition to their likely main mission, which is to destroy the rebels.

6. [] Estimates of rebel forces range between 50,000 and 100,000, and there are many more who just go out on raids for a night or so before returning home. Reports state that up to 95 percent of the people support the rebels.

7. [] Rebels are reported to be receiving military aid from foreign sources. This aid ranges from small-arms weapons of British, Chinese, Egyptian, and US origin to SAM-7 of unknown origin. This support, and increasing Afghan resentment to the Soviet occupation, has provided a base for the more widespread and active rebel insurgency of recent months.

8. [] In contrast, the Afghan Army has been reduced from 90,000 in December 1979 to between 30,000 and 40,000 — about 15,000 of whom are combat-effective. The rest have deserted and either joined the rebels or handed their weapons over to them. Although the desertions of large units early this year have generally ceased, in late May a brigade of Afghan Government troops mutinied in the provincial capital of Bamian. It is not clear whether the action was successful, but it illustrates the problem the Afghan Government is having regarding morale in its depleted armed forces. Soviet troops accompany Afghan government forces whenever they deploy on operations. It will probably be a long time before the Afghan Army can be given any important responsibility and can be expected to effectively counter the rebel threat.

9. [] The insurgency within Afghanistan has increased in recent months and, in contrast to President Brezhnev's statement, it will be a long time before the Soviet Government will be able to withdraw its troops leaving a friendly government and people on the border.

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